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IN THE VIETNAMESE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

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Following is the translation of an unsigned article
in Partelet, No 10, Budapest, October, 1960, pages 46-52.

During the last 15 years the land-property and agriculture of the Vietnamese Democratic Republic underwent a period of great transformation. This transformation included the codification of the annulment of the feudal law, the liberation of the productive forces of the peasantry, and the grouping of peasants into farmer's cooperatives.

After the victory of the revolution in August 1945, it was necessary in many cases to fight against the reactionary elements of the country: the foreign aggressors, the French colonists, and the starvation caused by the Japanese fascists towards the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945. After the victory won by the Resistance Movement over the returned French imperialists, the Government of the Vietnamese Democratic Republic under the guidance of the Indochinese Communist Party (today the Vietnamese Workers Party) undertook at once the liberation of the peasants from the oppression and exploitation by feudal landowners and the increase of productivity, and it also emphasized the importance of improving living standards.

In 1946 the Government issued a decree ordering a 25% decrease in rents. From 1949 to 1953 the Government passed new laws on further lowering of rents and interest on loans and on the establishment of agricultural taxes whose purpose was to limit the landowners' exploiting activity and lessen the peasants' burdens. Other decrees dealt with the repartition of the land-property of the French colonists and the treacherous landowners. The period 1953-1956 was the beginning of the political mobilization of the peasants for agrarian reform. The Government confiscated the properties neglected by the landholders and divided them among the landless and poor peasants. The peasants did not have to pay either the state or the landowners for the allotted land.

The execution of the land reform, 1953-1956, put a definite end to the landowning rights of the feudal lords in the 3653 communes of the delta region and in the central part of North Vietnam. In the mountainous districts, populated with two and a half million inhabitants, land became the working peasantry's property and in the course of progress the feudal forms of production came to an end.

On the basis of the gradually applied agricultural-policy measures the Government of the Vietnamese Democratic Republic achieved considerable

results in the development of peasant farms and in the gradual raising of the cultural and financial living standards of the peasants. During the ninth year of the long and stubborn resistance, the French troops gravely damaged the fields. Tens of thousands of peasants died. The peasants had to leave thousands of hectares fallow, for the enemy established "white zones" or ordered the concentration of the population of several villages and even the evacuation of entire districts. (In North Vietnam alone the uncultivated land exceeded 130,000 hectares.) The enemy confiscated the cattle and demolished or set fire to agricultural buildings. To this loss one must add a number of disasters caused by drought, flood, typhoons, insects, worms and cattle-plagues. Food production also dropped considerably.

In order to make it easier for the peasants to continue production, so that they could secure the bare minimum of alimentation of the population, the Vietnamese Workers Party and the government mobilized the peasantry to partake in the foundation of groups based on mutual cooperation and collective farms. From 1949 to 1950, the campaign for the foundation of cooperatives developed vigorously and its significance became more important. In 1949, in the whole country there were 21,243 mutual-assistance groups and 1,067 agricultural cooperatives.

Despite the numerous obstacles, the food problem during the years of resistance was solved owing to the correct policy of the Vietnamese Workers Party, the Government, the enduring ambition of the peasants, and the spreading growth of the cooperative movement. The fifth inner zone and the Viet-Bac region, always short of rice and for that reason they had to turn to the rice growers of South Vietnam and the delta region during the years of resistance became self-sufficient in rice. With their stocks they were able to feed a considerable number of troops of the People's Army. After the creation of a state of peace, North Vietnam started on the path of transition to socialism. The duty of the Vietnamese Workers Party and of the government was to lead the people in such a way that the execution of the reconstruction plan would coincide with the final results of the accomplishments of the agricultural reform. The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of The Vietnamese Workers Party at its session of September 1954, determined the following policy in the development of agriculture: "For the purpose of restoring economic life, it is necessary above all to restore and develop agriculture. This is the original point and the solid foundation of the activity with which we can develop industry, raise the living standard of the people, secure the food provisions of the country, speed up the distribution of goods. After 15 years of ravaging war, North Vietnam's agriculture had to struggle with many problems and the standard of its production is very low. Thousands and thousands of hectares of land lie fallow, thousands of villages are completely demolished, a good number of professions have stopped all activity. The people have nothing; in certain regions cattle and plough have vanished, the big hydraulic

system is almost completely ruined, and the dam network is seriously damaged. Many patriots were forced to flee southward, wither under force or as a consequence of plotting and, thus, thousands of hectares remained without working hands." The years 1954 and 1955 brought a series of disasters. Several regions were ravaged by famine. In such a situation there is only one means to reorganize and redevelop agriculture: the grouping of peasants for the realization of collective farming. On 30 May 1955, the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Workers Party adopted a resolution on the directive making officials obligated to help in the organization of mutual-assistance agricultural groups. At the end of 1955 the Party Central Committee decided to create a certain number of cooperatives in order to acquire practical experience, to train leaders, and to create all those conditions with which the cooperative movement could be made popular in the villages. The cooperative movement from that moment on gathered strength.

On the basis of the Central Committee's decision, according to which "On the occasions of the agricultural work of the fifth month of 1958 and of the tenth month's harvest, one must strongly encourage the cooperative movement." The campaign directed at foundation of the mutual-assistance groups picked up very fast. In June 1958 only 41% of the peasant families were members of such groups. In December of that year this percentage rose to 65.7%. In April 1958, there were only 134 cooperatives; in December their number was 4,967, and included 5% of the peasantry. If we add the number of peasant families participating in mutual-assistance groups to the number of families in cooperatives, we can state that 70% of the peasant families were on the path of collective farming.

The 14th Session of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Workers Party, held in November 1958, analyzed the situation in the villages and the transformations, and decided on the collectivization of agriculture. In April 1959, the 16th Session of Central Committee determined that which must be adhered to in the collectivization of agriculture. The 10th Session of the National Assembly came out with concrete decisions on this matter. The Party and the people are totally united in the socialist transformation and development of agriculture. At the end of 1959, the cooperatives in North Vietnam contained 1,243,822 peasant families. This amounted to 45.41% of the total of farming peasantry. The area of the land cultivated by cooperatives is 734,430 hectares, 41% of which is ploughland.

Among fishermen and salt producers (from sea water) the cooperative movement develops vigorously and constantly. At this point 38.3% of fishermen's families and 40.4% of salt producers' are cooperative members.

Parallel to the agricultural cooperatives one must consider the formation and development of credit cooperatives and of purchasing-and-selling cooperatives.

In December 1959, in North Vietnam there were 4,278 credit co-

operative groups with 761,788 members, representing 27% of the peasant families. The total amount of borrowed money was 10,244,648 dongs. The purchasing-and-selling cooperatives have 238 groups and 3,955 offices. The latter delivered 30,100 cattle, 13,905 tons of chemical fertilizer, and 1,002,200 various pieces of agricultural tools to the peasants in 1958.

During the last years, 92 state-owned farms, including some farms created by the People's Army, were formed. These establishments have great convincing power on the peasants, because they became model factories and banner carriers for the activity called for by the popularization of new agricultural machinery and new agricultural methods and of their practical application on the peasant farms. The operations of these farms encourages the peasants and incites them to join the followers of the new cooperative way.

For the vigorous support of the cooperative movement and for the development of agricultural production, the Vietnamese Workers Party and the government invested more than 100 million dongs (the donations of other socialist countries are not included in this sum). This money was spent mostly on construction of hydraulic systems and dams and on their maintenance. During the last five years 14 hydraulic systems which were destroyed during the war with the French were reconstructed and enlarged. A number of new water-power stations were built. Among these we find the big water power station on the Bac Hung Hai. The reconstruction of 3,500 kilometers of river and sea dams was also completed. During this work, which began in 1955, 161,960,797 m³ of stone were moved; this is ten times more than in works of this kind during the colonial era. The irrigated sowed area also increased considerably: in 1955 -- 923,000 hectares; in 1958 -- 1,587,674 hectares; and in 1959 -- 1,919,376 hectares. The major part of the irrigation of rice-fields was secured. Comparing 1959 to 1955, the non-irrigated fields dropped 36%, even though the quantity of precipitation was about equal to that in 1959.

The Party and Government brought great care to bear on the problem of fertilization, and for that reason they decided to build a number of fertilizer-producing factories. The triennial plan of the government (1958-1960), which serves the national industrial economy's development, established factories producing phosphate and nitrogen fertilizers. At the same time the government set a double duty for economizing the water supply: floodwater was trapped and used for making the fields arable. For this reason the government advised control of the Red River and planned for its utilization.

The National Bank voted considerable amounts of money to help the productivity of the peasants. From 1955 to 1959 the farmers received more than 50,100,000 dongs in the form of loans. This sum made it possible for them to buy 124,678 bison and cattle, 246,543 ploughs and harrows, several tens of tons of fertilizer, 54,297 fishing nets and 3,388

fishing boats.

In addition to this support of agriculture, the government spent a considerable amount of money for cadre training, formation of experts in hydraulics, and the foundation of agricultural research institutes, rice and cotton centers, livestock settlements, and technical offices. The government, therefore, devotes a large amount of money to making the best experimental results popular among the peasants, to help them in the perfection of their production techniques and in the improvement of their machinery and tools for the sake of higher productivity. The following table illustrates the agricultural progress since 1939 (the highest productivity before the war).

| AGRICULTURAL | | | |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| PRODUCTS | 1939 | 1957 | 1959 |
| Rice | 2,407,000 tons | 3,947,000 tons | 5,194,000 tons |
| Corn | 140,000 tons | 197,000 tons | 227,740 tons |
| Cotton | 1,000 tons | 5,700 tons | 6,190 tons |
| Jute, hemp | 440 tons | 5,700 tons | 7,700 tons |
| Sugar cane | 109,200 tons | 330,000 tons | 393,000 tons |
| Peanuts | 3,400 tons | 23,700 tons | 31,900 tons |
| Fish | 97,500 tons | 136,400 tons | 130,000 tons |
| Salt | 33,400 tons | 109,750 tons | 130,000 tons |
| Bison and Cattle | 1,350,500 head | 2,140,000 head | 2,371,674 head |
| Swine | 2,255,000 head | 2,950,000 head | 3,612,534 head |

CULTIVATED FIELDS AND AVERAGE YIELD PER HECTARE

| YEAR | 5th MONTH HARVEST | | 10th MONTH HARVEST | |
|------|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| | CULTIVATED FIELDS IN HECTARES | AVERAGE YIELD PER HECTARE IN CENTNERS | CULTIVATED FIELDS IN HECTARES | AVERAGE YIELD PER HECTARE IN CENTNERS |
| 1939 | 705,000 | 12.26 | 1,136,000 | 13.37 |
| 1957 | 844,000 | 17.45 | 1,347,000 | 18.36 |
| 1959 | 852,800 | 20.71 | 1,396,900 | 24.13 |

YEARLY AVERAGE OF FOOD QUANTITY PER PERSON

| YEAR | FOOD CONVERTED INTO RICE VALUE | RICE ONLY |
|------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| 1939 | 231 kilograms | 211 kilograms |
| 1957 | 323 kilograms | 236 kilograms |
| 1959 | 405 kilograms | 356 kilograms |

While in North Vietnam agricultural production and the average yield per hectare is constantly increasing, the peasants and people struggling under the frightening and exploiting policy of American imperialists and South Vietnamese officials remain far behind those of the Northern part of the country, even though South Vietnam always has had the reputation of being a rice-producing power.

The facts mentioned clearly show a solid foundation and a healthy development of the collectivization of agriculture in North Vietnam. This movement solved simultaneously the task of the socialist transformation of production, the development of agricultural production, and they way of thinking of millions of peasants. This movement consolidated the union between workers and peasants; it created favorable conditions with the help of which North Vietnam made a considerable step towards the establishment of socialism. At the same time, it stimulated the peasants in South Vietnam to double their efforts in the fight for the unification of the nation. Considering the rapid progress, it is probable that by the end of 1960 the lower types of cooperatives will be liquidated.